1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 216-A]

857 One of their favorite sports is fishing, for which they use small wooden floats with a piece of vine attached, similar to that described by Burrows (1898). Later they split into groups according to sex as well as age. The boys, until they are allowed to take part in the hunt itself, carry out imitation hunts around the camp. 881 Even at this age, however, and after under- 882 going the *nkumbi* initiation, they are still under 593 the authority of their mothers. Unlike the information given by Schebesta for the archers, the boys in a net-hunting band do not break completely away from their mothers until they become full hunters, which may be as much as two or more years after their *nkumbi*.

• 868 Education is through imitation, and both boys and girls have miniature hunting-and-gathering utensils and may, in addition, make miniature replicas of any adult possession (Fig. 45).

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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important, for both net hunters and archers, that a hunter should know well the habits of those who are near him on the hunt. Insofar as children learn to hunt mostly but by no means entirely from their fathers, it is obvious that brothers are likely to be most familiar with each other's hunting techniques, and will thus make the best hunting partners. But against this work many other practices, such as communal hunting games for all children, regardless of relationship, and the frequency of adoption, and of assimilation of adult strangers into the band.

If we cannot find any explanation for the flux and instability that seem characteristic of the band in terms of kinship or economy, or indeed in terms of any aspect of forest life, both become immediately meaningful in considering the relationship between the band and the village. Without going into this in detail at the moment, it must already be evident that the system, or lack of it, must be unhappily confusing for the patrilineal patrilocal villagers, who claim both lineal and territorial rights over Mbuti bands. For as we have seen, a band does not maintain any kind of unilineal integrity even within a single camp, let alone from one camp to the next. And owing to the wider flux, caused by the constant process of fission and fusion, the band has merely territorial reference and cannot be said to apply to specific individuals or lineages. A lineage such as Cephu's may be in the Epulu territory one month and in Ebiani the next. So with every lineage, as with every individual, there is an infinity of territories to which he may move if it pleases him, and the system, such as it is, encourages such movement to the point that no villager can ever be sure of what Mbuti lineages are hunting in "his" territory. Let us leave it for the moment, then, that at least one possible structural result of the combination of the nonlineal nature of the band and its tendency to flux is the counteraction of the village system, rendering the villagers' lineal and territorial claims impractical of assertion.

THE FAMILY

It would of course, be ridiculous to deny that there is any system of kinship, but it is certain that the kinship system does not have the same importance as a focal point of social control as it may in other African societies. To my mind this is undeniably linked to the ad hoc nature of the society, with its almost complete lack of concern for the past, as for the future. This is something we shall discover in

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eat there with their fellows. There is no set mealtime, and any one person eating alone is likely to attract his friends, who will expect to share his food. Only if a family is eating together by their hearth will they be undisturbed.

Infants are allowed to crawl all over the camp, and will be picked up and fondled by anyone, and even fed, if old enough. If they get in the way, or crawl into a fire, they are picked up roughly by an arm or a leg, slapped hard and brought back to their mother's hut. Even at this age their education begins, a concentrated effort being made to teach them erotic dancing before they can properly walk.

Children have a *bopi* (playground) of their own, separated from the camp by a short trail. It is frequently by a stream in which the youngsters can splash and swim. If they make too much noise, however, they are severely criticized, and it is not thought good for them to spend too much time in the water. They have a number of games that are mainly for amusement, such as spinning tops, swinging on vines, and climbing on trees until they bend to the ground, then jumping off. But even these games teach quickness of reaction and body control. Other games are more strictly imitative of adult activities, and are a primary means of educating the children. They may be played alone or with the help of youths or elders, occasionally of the hunters. Generally, however, parents fondle their children rather than play with them.

From the time they can walk both girls and boys play "house." They wander off from the camp, though never out of earshot, collect the necessary saplings and leaves, and return making the pretense of carrying a heavy load. The girl then goes through the motions of preparing the leaves and sharpening the ends of the saplings while the boy, with a tiny bow and arrow, goes off hunting. While his "wife," as he calls her, sticks the saplings in the ground and makes a rather crude imitation of a hut frame, then covering it with the leaves, the "husband" is busy catching some kind of food—either a rat, if he is skillful enough with his bow, or else some slow game such as snails and grubs. If he is unsuccessful the two may go off together and, unlike adults, fish. If this is unsuccessful the boy will say he is going to "the village" and that they will "eat the villagers." He then creeps into the camp and steals a morsel of village food, a banana or manioc root, from wherever he can find it. The food is cooked and eaten together, and the young couple lie down together and pretend to make love.

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Another important imitative game is the hunt, in which a youth or an elder pretends to be an antelope, sometimes with another pretending to be a leopard. An old piece of a real hunting net is used, and once again every action is gone through in almost exact imitation of a real hunt. The antelope and the leopard move erratically and unexpectedly to test the reactions of the children, and any child who fails to react properly is laughed out of the game. The game continues up to the ensnarement of the antelope in the net, then abruptly ends and starts again. Different localities in or around the camp are chosen for these mock hunts, to show the necessity for varying the hunting technique. If any Mbuti are keeping chickens for the villagers (this is often done when a camp is near a village, as the villagers have reasons for wishing to conceal their wealth), the chickens often become the quarry.

Girls imitate their mothers by carrying a stick of rough wood as a baby, perhaps in a tiny hide sling. Any girls large enough to carry a real baby do so. They make miniature carrying baskets and go off with other girls on gathering expeditions, always returning with some real food either found in the forest or begged or stolen from the camp. With their hunting and fishing activities as well as this gathering, the children make a small contribution to the food economy even at this age. They also learn not only to rely on their fellow age mates for help in food-getting activities, but to share with them. The sharing is largely left to the girl's decision.

The boys also learn to live and work with their fellows of different families rather than with their nuclear family, and will often be far more intimate with an unrelated boy of the same age than with a brother much older or younger. They play many games that develop quickness of eye and co-ordination of the body, such as the spear practice, where one boy stands in the middle with a large forest fruit at the end of a six foot vine which he swings around him, trailing the fruit about twelve inches above the ground. The other boys stand in a circle around him, their fire-hardened spears poised. As the fruit passes them they throw their spears at it. If they miss they have to dash in to retrieve their spears while the fruit continues to swing around, and other spears continue to be thrown. If a spear hits its mark and holds firm, the boy in the center tries to dislodge it by bouncing the fruit on the ground as he swings it around. This is an additional hazard for the others, as the spear may come flying out at

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857 868 [883] them. Youths join the older children at this game, but never in a supervisory capacity.

883 561 868 882 Youths may also join the children on their swings in the *bopi*, and will almost certainly build their swings for them, climbing high up into adjacent trees to drape a long liana between them. They then teach the younger children the wild somersaulting games on these swings that are particularly characteristic of the honey season. On the other side the youths equally often join the hunters but, again, always as a separate group, sometimes participating fully, but still as youths. And as youths they continue the process already begun in childhood, of growing more away from their nuclear families and together as an age group. Their hunting and scavenging abilities are greater, and they sometimes even maintain a self-sufficient food economy. As youths they are allowed to stay up at night, instead of retiring with their mothers, and they build their own fire near the hunters' fire and cook their own food and sing and dance, sometimes with the hunters and elders, sometimes separately.

882 As youths they are also given increasing responsibility, especially in the economic life of the band. They may listen to the discussions of the hunters and elders, but even if they make comments, as they do, they are not readily listened to unless it is a matter pertaining to their age group. Then they are required to be able to voice their opinions and cite precedents. They are expected to show an adult sense [832] of responsibility in matters concerning sex and marriage, and although [836] they may flirt quite openly and even audaciously, they never "play house," and not until after the *elima* will a girl again show her favor [584] by cooking for a boy. Then it is tantamount to an admission of betrothal.

224 884 885 56 [422] [581] After marriage a boy acquires a net. It may be made for him by his mother, or his father may give him part of his net to which he will add, with his wife's help. He has already demonstrated his hunting prowess or he would not be married, but now he is a full hunter with additional responsibilities. Whereas economic activity is shared between the hunters and youths, it is the hunters who ultimately make the decisions concerning camp life, and about the hunt. Where to go for the daily hunt, when to move camp, to what region, how to deal with threats of physical danger, and how to surmount physical problems; such are the questions the hunter has to face. They all concern 88 the band as a whole. Nonphysical dangers and problems—that is to 56 say, moral, psychological and spiritual issues, those that affect the

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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out the liquid that drains from it (*kombo*) is caught in leaf cups and drunk. Never is any honey wasted, never is it kept or used in the preparation of other foods; what is not consumed on the spot is eaten or drunk the moment it is brought back into camp.

There is a craving for honey during the season that never seems to be satisfied. No amount of alternative foods, even meat, can reduce this passion for honey. Each band has its own way of listening for the telltale sound of bees swarming. Among some, a leaf is rubbed between the hands, which are then rubbed across the forehead to enable the hunter to see the bees high up in their hives. I found this practice among the eastern archers. Elsewhere, throughout the net-hunting region and also among the western archers, at least, the chameleon (*ameuli*) is believed to lead the Mbuti to honey by uttering a long-drawn-out throaty cry. Chameleons, however, are not known to be capable of making any such noise, and the noted ornithologist Dr. James Chapin claims to have tracked this weird sound down to the *Sarothrura elegans*, a bird with a skinny pouch in its neck that enables it to give an unbroken wail lasting fifteen seconds or more.

But most noticeable among a people who take the success of hunting and gathering so much for granted is the presence of honey-collecting magic, and an inordinate emphasis on song and dance, legend-telling and other recreational activities. There is no doubt that whatever else it may be, the honey season is also a festive season where celebration is the order of the day, even at the cost of a relatively empty stomach.

Some activities are purely recreational, such as spinning tops made of nut sections, and gambling with dried seeds thrown on the ground to make up a total number that is a multiple of four. Others are educational, and in particular the honey swing is for training youngsters in agility at heights, as are the informal contests at climbing dangling vines. The honey swing is suspended from two high branches, so that it has a long, powerful arc. The youths line up and one jumps into the bend of the vine that forms the seat and sets the swing in motion. As the swing moves backwards, a youth runs forward, catching onto the side of the vine, giving it added momentum. As it carries him off the ground, he throws his legs forward and up over his head and into the swing just as the previous occupant jumps to the ground.

The younger children also play with smaller swings, and they have their own game of climbing saplings until there are so many of them that the young tree bends to the ground. The children then leap to

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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wrong, or fondle him and feed him with delicacies if he is quiet and gives them no trouble. He knows his real mother and father, of course, and has a special affection for them and they for him, but from an early age he learns that he is the child of them all, for they are all children of the forest.

When a hunting party goes off there are always people left in the camp—usually some of the older men and women, some children, and perhaps one or two younger men and women. The children always have their own playground, called *bopi*, a few yards off from the main camp. At Apa Lelo it was on the shore where the river twisted around an island and one branch of it cut in almost between Cephu's camp and the main camp. The water was fairly shallow there, and all day long the children splashed and wallowed about to their heart's content. If they tired of that, they had a couple of vine swings in their bopi; one was a small one for younger children, and the other was hung from two tall trees. Infants watched with envy as the older children swung wildly about, climbing high up on the vine strands and performing all sorts of acrobatics.

There were always trees for the youngsters to climb, and this is one of the main sports even for those not yet old enough to walk properly. The great game is for half a dozen or more children to climb to the top of a young tree, bending it down until its top touches the ground. Then they all leap off at once, and if anyone is too slow he goes flying back upward as the tree springs upright, to the jeers and laughter of his friends.

Like children everywhere, Pygmy children love to imitate their adult idols. This is the beginning of their schooling, for the adults will always encourage and help them. What else is there for them to learn except to grow into good adults? So a fond father will make a tiny bow for his son, and arrows of soft wood with blunt points. He may also give him a strip of a hunting net. A mother will delight herself and her daughter by weaving a miniature carrying basket. At